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# Connecting Charitable Food Assistance Organizations to Federal Funding Information and Resources

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## Purpose and Scope

This report is intended to provide information and resources that Members of Congress and their staff can use to help charitable food assistance organizations in their districts navigate the federal assistance landscape. Charitable food assistance organizations include emergency feeding organizations, such as food banks and food pantries, and other entities that address food insecurity in local communities.

This report provides information on select federal programs that may be relevant to charitable food assistance organizations. It focuses primarily on major programs within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These programs include formula grants, competitive grants, loans, and assistance to food banks and food pantries through the provision of USDA Foods.<sup>1</sup>

This report is not exhaustive in scope and does not include information on child nutrition programs, disaster response programs, or nutrition education programs such as SNAP-Ed.

## Federal Grants Overview

Most federal grant funding (more than 80%) goes to states in the form of *formula* or *block* grants, which are then distributed by state agencies through grants or contracts to local entities that run specific programs or offer specific services. Information on funding through formula or block grant programs is available from the state or local agency that received the prime federal grant.

A smaller amount of federal grant funding is available on a *competitive* basis and is generally awarded directly to entities. Grant seekers for competitive grants can monitor Grants.gov for open grant competitions under these programs.

This report identifies the assistance type, such as formula grant, competitive grant, or loan, for each included program. The competitive grants identified below include assistance listing numbers (formerly called Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance [CFDA] numbers), which are a useful way to search Grants.gov for competitive funding opportunities.

For additional information on the federal grant funding process, see

- CRS Report RL34035, *Grants Work in a Congressional Office*.
- CRS Report RL34012, *Resources for Grantseekers*.
- CRS Report R42769, *Federal Grants-in-Aid Administration: A Primer*.

## Food Procurement and Distribution

The following programs provide federal assistance for procuring or distributing food products to low-income populations or persons in need of emergency food assistance. These programs include the Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Projects, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), the Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), and the Older Americans Act Nutrition Services Program.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Food and Nutrition Service, “USDA Foods are foods purchased from American farmers, dairies, ranchers, and fisheries to support federal nutrition assistance programs and American agriculture.” More information about USDA Foods is available at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/usda-foods/foods-available/product-consideration>.

## The Emergency Food Assistance Program

**Assistance type:** USDA Foods, formula grant.

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), which is administered by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), provides food commodities and funding for administrative costs to state agencies to support emergency feeding organizations serving low-income populations. TEFAP commodities and funding are allocated to states using a statutory formula that takes into account poverty and unemployment rates. States establish eligibility rules and distribute commodities and funding to recipient agencies (e.g., food banks), which may then distribute the food products themselves or partner with sub-recipient agencies (e.g., food pantries) to distribute food products to eligible low-income households and individuals.

**Grant seekers can contact their state agency:**

- TEFAP state agency contacts: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/program-contacts>.

**For additional information on TEFAP, see**

- CRS Report R45408, *The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP): Background and Funding*.
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service, “TEFAP Fact Sheet”: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/tefap-fact-sheet>.
- TEFAP website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/emergency-food-assistance-program>.

## TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Projects

**Assistance type:** Formula grant.

Farm to Food Bank Project grants, which are administered by USDA FNS, provide funding to state agencies that administer TEFAP to support the harvesting, processing, packaging, and transportation of commodities donated by agricultural producers, processors, and distributors to emergency feeding organizations. The goals of the program include reducing food waste, providing food to individuals in need, and building relationships between farmers (and others in the food supply chain) and emergency feeding organizations. State agencies that choose to participate in the program must partner with at least one emergency feeding organization to carry out the program.<sup>2</sup> The subgrantee selection process differs by state.

**Organizations seeking partnerships can contact their state agency:**

- TEFAP state agency contacts: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/program-contacts>.

**For additional information on TEFAP Farm to Food Bank Projects, see**

- Farm to Food Bank Projects website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/farm-to-food-bank-project-grants>.
- FNS Guidance Document “FD-151: TEFAP Questions and Answers about Farm to Food Bank Projects”: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/fd-151-farm-to-food-bank-qas>.

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<sup>2</sup> 7 C.F.R. §251.6(a)(5). “Emergency feeding organization” is defined in TEFAP regulations at 7 C.F.R. §251.3(e).

## The Commodity Supplemental Food Program

**Assistance type:** USDA Foods.

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), which is administered by USDA FNS, provides monthly food packages of USDA commodities for distribution to low-income seniors, as well as funding for program administrative costs to state agencies and authorized Indian tribal organizations. States determine participant eligibility by applying income limits at or below 130% of the federal poverty line. Charitable food assistance organizations may be eligible to partner with state agencies to distribute food packages as local CSFP agencies.

**Grant seekers can contact their state agency to inquire about CSFP partnerships:**

- CSFP state agency contacts: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/program-contacts>.

**For additional information on CSFP, see**

- USDA FNS, “CSFP Fact Sheet”: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/fact-sheet>.
- CSFP website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/csfp/commodity-supplemental-food-program>.

## The Emergency Food and Shelter Program

**Assistance type:** Formula grant.

The Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP), which is administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), provides funding to local nonprofit, faith-based, and governmental organizations to support existing programs that aid families and individuals experiencing or at risk of experiencing hunger or homelessness, including services such as providing meals or groceries. FEMA awards funding to the EFSP National Board, which then allocates funding to jurisdictions (counties and cities) based on a formula that considers poverty and unemployment data. Local nonprofit, faith-based, and governmental organizations may then apply for funding through their jurisdiction’s Local Board on a competitive basis during periods of open application. The National Board provides funding directly to organizations that are recommended by Local Boards.

**Grant seekers can contact their jurisdiction’s Local EFSP Board:**

- From the EFSP National Board website, click “Funded Organizations” on the right side of the screen to view Local Boards by EFSP-funded jurisdiction (use the dropdowns to select grant cycle views, states, and jurisdictions): <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/index.cfm>.

**For additional information on EFSP, see**

- CRS In Focus IF12026, *FEMA’s Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP)*.
- FEMA EFSP website: <https://www.fema.gov/grants/emergency-food-and-shelter-program>.
- EFSP National Board website: <https://www.efsp.unitedway.org/efsp/website/index.cfm>.

## Older Americans Act Nutrition Services Program

**Assistance type:** Formula grant.

The Older Americans Act (OAA) Nutrition Services Program, administered by the Administration on Aging (AoA), a subagency within the HHS Administration for Community Living, includes the Home-Delivered Nutrition Services Program (sometimes informally known as “Meals on Wheels”) and the Congregate Nutrition Services Program, which provides meals in group settings such as senior centers, community centers, schools, and churches. These programs are targeted toward older adults, aged 60+, with a focus on certain low-income and vulnerable populations. AoA administers federal funding to state agencies according to a statutory formula. Grant funds are then allocated by state agencies to local agencies based on a state-developed formula. State and local agencies typically contract with community-based nonprofit organizations to provide home-delivered and congregate meals to older adults.

**Grant seekers can contact their state unit on aging or area agencies on aging:**

- To locate state units on aging, scroll down to “Aging Resources by State”:  
<https://www.hhs.gov/aging/state-resources/index.html>.
- To locate local area agencies, use the Eldercare Locator: <https://eldercare.acl.gov>.

**For additional information on the OAA Nutrition Services Program, see**

- CRS In Focus IF10633, *Older Americans Act: Nutrition Services Program*.
- HHS Administration for Community Living (ACL), Administration on Aging (AoA), Nutrition Services website: <https://acl.gov/programs/health-wellness/nutrition-services>.

## Rural Food Assistance Organizations

This section provides information on grant and loan programs that may be relevant to rural charitable food assistance organizations. These programs are administered by USDA Rural Development and include the Community Facilities Direct Loan and Grant Program and the Economic Impact Initiative Grants. Organizations eligible for these programs must be located in a rural area, defined at 7 U.S.C. §1991(a)(13)(C) as an area with a population of 20,000 or fewer inhabitants.<sup>3</sup>

### Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program

**Assistance type:** Competitive grant, direct loan.

The Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program provides competitive funding in the form of direct loans, grants, or a combination of grants and loans for the purchase, construction, or improvement of essential community facilities in rural areas. Essential community facilities include those related to local food systems, such as food banks, food pantries, community gardens, and community kitchens. Community-based nonprofit corporations, public bodies, and federally recognized tribes are eligible to apply for direct loans and grants on a year-round basis.

**Grant seekers can contact their Rural Development state office or monitor Grants.gov for periods of open application:**

- Rural Development state agency contacts: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/offices/state-offices>.

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<sup>3</sup> 7 U.S.C. §1991(a)(13)(C) states, “For the purpose of community facility direct loans and grants under paragraphs (1), (19), (20), and (21) of section 1926(a) of this title, the terms ‘rural’ and ‘rural area’ mean any area other than a city, town, or unincorporated area that has a population of greater than 20,000 inhabitants.”

- Search Grants.gov for Assistance Listing/CFDA Number 10.766:  
<https://www.grants.gov/search-grants>.

**For additional information on the Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program, see**

- The Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program website:  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/community-facilities-direct-loan-grant-program>.
- The “Community Facilities Direct Loan & Grant Program Fact Sheet”:  
[https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fact-sheet/508\\_RD\\_FS\\_RHS\\_CFDirect.pdf](https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fact-sheet/508_RD_FS_RHS_CFDirect.pdf).

## Economic Impact Initiative Grant Program

**Assistance type:** Competitive grant.

The Economic Impact Initiative Grant Program provides funding for up to 75% of project costs to construct, enlarge, or improve essential community facilities in rural areas with unemployment rates greater than 19.5% and median household incomes below 90% of the state nonmetropolitan median household income. Essential community facilities include those related to local food systems, such as food banks, food pantries, community gardens, and community kitchens. Nonprofit organizations, public bodies, and federally recognized tribes are eligible to apply for Economic Impact Initiative Grants during periods of open application.

**Grant seekers can contact their Rural Development state office or monitor Grants.gov for periods of open application:**

- Rural Development state agency contacts: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/about-rd/offices/state-offices>.
- Search Grants.gov for Assistance Listing/CFDA Number 10.766:  
<https://www.grants.gov/search-grants>.

**For additional information on the Economic Impact Initiative Grant program, see**

- The Economic Impact Initiative Grant program website:  
<https://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/community-facilities/economic-impact-initiative-grants#overview>.
- The “Economic Impact Initiative Grants” program fact sheet:  
[https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fact-sheet/508\\_RD\\_FS\\_RHS\\_EconomicIIGrants.pdf](https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/fact-sheet/508_RD_FS_RHS_EconomicIIGrants.pdf).

## Local and Community Food Partnerships

Local and community food partnerships include a wide range of grants, loans, and technical assistance programs that provide support to food assistance entities. The USDA programs below include the Community Food Projects Competitive Grants Program (CFPCGP), the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program, and the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI). These programs are focused primarily on supporting entities in underserved communities.

### Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program

**Assistance type:** Competitive grant.

The Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP), administered by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), provides one-time grants to support projects that meet the food needs of low-income people; increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own needs; and promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues. The grant program funds three types of grants: training and technical assistance, planning, and community food projects. Only private nonprofit entities are eligible for CFPCGP grants.

**Grant seekers can monitor the NIFA website or Grants.gov for periods of open application:**

- NIFA Request for Applications (RFA) calendar: <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/upcoming-request-applications-calendar>.
- Search Grants.gov for Assistance Listing/CFDA Number 10.225: <https://www.grants.gov/search-grants>.

**For additional information on the Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program and resources for grant applicants, see**

- CRS Report R46538, *Local and Urban Food Systems: Selected Farm Bill and Other Federal Programs*.
- CFPCGP website: <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/hunger-food-security-programs/community-food-projects-competitive-grant-program-cfpcgp>.
- The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) grant resources website: <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/training>.

## Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program

**Assistance type:** Competitive grant.

Through the Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program, USDA FNS awards annual competitive grants to help entities plan, develop, and implement programs that connect students to the sources of their food. Eligible entities include schools and institutions that participate in Child Nutrition Programs,<sup>4</sup> state and local agencies, nonprofits, and agricultural producers. Farm to School activities may include planting community gardens, creating menus to serve local foods in schools, and taking field trips to farms.

**Grant seekers can monitor the FNS website or Grants.gov for periods of open application:**

- FNS open grant opportunities: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/fm/grant-opportunities>.
- Search Grants.gov for Assistance Listing/CFDA Number 10.575: <https://www.grants.gov/search-grants>.

**For additional information on the Farm to School Program and resources for grant applicants, see**

- The Farm to School Program website: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/farm-school-grant-program>.
- “Farm to School Fact Sheets”: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/fact-sheets>.
- Farm to School resources for grant applications: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/f2s/resources-farm-school-grant-program-applicants>.

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<sup>4</sup> CRS Report R46234, *School Meals and Other Child Nutrition Programs: Background and Funding*, provides an overview of the Child Nutrition Programs.



## Healthy Food Financing Initiative

**Assistance type:** Competitive grant.

The Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI; Assistance Listing no. 10.872) is a public-private partnership funded by USDA Rural Development that provides loans, grants, and technical assistance to eligible applicants to improve and support access to healthy, affordable food in rural and urban underserved communities. The program is administered by the Reinvestment Fund on behalf of USDA Rural Development. Eligible entities include state agencies, nonprofit corporations, for-profit businesses, and cooperative businesses.

**Grant seekers can monitor the Reinvestment Fund website:**

- The Reinvestment Fund website: <https://www.investinginfood.com/funding-opportunities/>.

**For additional information on the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, see**

- CRS In Focus IF12214, *The USDA Healthy Food Financing Initiative*.
- HFFI fact sheet: <https://www.rd.usda.gov/sites/default/files/USDA-RD-FS-Healthy-Foods-Financing-Initiative.pdf>.

## Selected Other Federal Programs

The following select federal programs are not specifically targeted toward food assistance, but they may be used by charitable food assistance organizations for programming or capital needs. These programs include the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), and the GSA Surplus Real Property and Personal Property Programs.

### Community Services Block Grant

The Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), which is a formula grant administered by the HHS Administration for Children and Families (ACF), provides funds to states, territories, and tribes for distribution to local agencies to support a wide range of community-based activities to reduce poverty, including nutrition services and activities.

**Grant seekers can contact their state agency:**

- CSBG State and Territory Contacts: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/map/csbg-map-state-and-territory-grantee-contact-information>.

**For additional information on CSBG, see**

- CRS Report RL32872, *Community Services Block Grants (CSBG): Background and Funding*.

### Social Services Block Grant

The Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), which is a formula grant administered by HHS ACF, provides funds to states and territories to support a variety of initiatives for vulnerable children, adults, and families, including congregate meals and home-delivered meals.

**Grant seekers can contact their state agency:**

- SSBG state and territory Contacts: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ocs/contact-information/ssbg-grantee-contact-information>.

**For additional information on SSBG, see**

- CRS Report 94-953, *Social Services Block Grant: Background and Funding*.

## Community Development Block Grant

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), which is a formula grant administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, may be considered by charitable food assistance organizations for capital projects or programming support. CDBG may be used for a variety of community development projects, to include community facilities and public services. Programs that promote nutrition may be considered public services under CDBG.

**Grant seekers can contact their state or local agency:**

- HUD grantee contacts (use the filters on the left of the page to view grantees by program and state): <https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/contacts/>.

**For additional information on CDBG, see**

- CRS Report R46733, *Community Development Block Grants: Funding and Allocation Processes*.

## GSA Surplus Real Property and Personal Property Programs

U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) surplus real property and personal property programs may also be considered by charitable food assistance organizations for capital improvement and expansion projects. GSA surplus property programs allow entities to acquire surplus federal real estate property and surplus federal personal property, such as office equipment, furniture, and vehicles. Eligibility for donations of GSA surplus personal property is limited to specific entities, including certain nonprofit, tax-exempt organizations that provide food assistance to homeless or impoverished populations. State and local government organizations or nonprofit organizations that provide nutrition services to older adults and also receive OAA funds may be eligible to receive donations of surplus federal personal property.

**Eligible entities seeking GSA surplus real property can monitor the GSA Real Property Disposition website:**

- Office of Real Property Disposition Resource Center: <https://disposal.gsa.gov/s/>.

**Eligible entities seeking GSA surplus personal property can contact their state representative:**

- Contact a state agency for surplus property representative: <https://www.gsa.gov/buy-through-us/government-property-for-sale-or-lease/personal-property-for-reuse-and-sale/for-state-agencies-and-public-organizations/state-agencies-for-surplus-property-contacts>.

**For additional information on GSA surplus real and personal property programs, see**

- GSA Surplus Real Property for Public Use website: <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/real-estate-services/overview/surplus-real-property-available-for-public-use>.

- GSA Personal Property for Reuse and Sale website: <https://www.gsa.gov/buy-through-us/government-property-for-sale-or-lease/personal-property-for-reuse-and-sale>.

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